

LEGENDS  
OF VIRGINIA

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# LEGENDS OF VIRGINIA



HELENA LEFROY CAPERTON

LEGENDS OF VIRGINIA



RICHMOND

GARRETT & MASSIE · PUBLISHERS

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RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES



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PREFACE

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*While recounting these fugitive memories, the writer might well exclaim with Julius Caesar: "honor is the subject of my story." If by any chance, the reader imagines he hears a familiar rattling of his own family skeleton, let him read on, calm in the certainty that the writer has as little knowledge of the identity of these sweet, brave ghosts as himself.*

*The inimitable story-teller from whom came these tales was unconscious of preserving in an adolescent mind the tenderness and gallantry of a past generation. Inevitably these stories have drifted down the stream of the years, rich with drama and romance.*

*Helena Lefroy Caperton.*

*Richmond, Virginia.  
August 22, 1931.*

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The Honest Wine Merchant, The Lost Governess, and The Wedding of this group of stories were first published in *The Black Swan* magazine in a series entitled "Virginia Silhouettes," and are reprinted by permission of T. Beverly Campbell, publisher of that magazine. The Honest Wine Merchant was listed in the O. Henry Memorial Award, Best Short Stories of 1930, and The Lost Governess in the 1930 O'Brien *Yearbook of the American Short Story*.

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# LEGENDS OF VIRGINIA



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## THE HONEST WINE MERCHANT

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A DISTINGUISHED Virginian, dying, left a fund for the restoration of the family burying ground, where in the shadow of their living kinsmen, his race slept its last, long sleep. Soon came landscape gardeners, who cleared away the clinging honeysuckle from about the crepe myrtle and magnolia, revealing quiet, grey stones, over long-forgotten resting places. In so far as possible, all was to be left as originally designed by an early Cavalier ancestor, though centuries had caused box and yew to meet overhead with the sweet gloom of a cloister.

The work was well on its way when the architect directing the restoration came to the mistress of the place. "We cannot continue as planned, for in the centre of the plot we have struck an unmarked grave. I would suggest that

we move it to one side under the west wall." The mistress drew herself up to a yet more slender height. "What? Disturb a guest? Oh, no! That is quite impossible! We have a stranger within our gates. Do not touch the resting place."

\* \* \*

The chords of memory vibrated within me, on hearing this, and I called to mind the story of the Honest Wine Merchant, and wondered.

In those days of too soft living before the Civil War, when our grandfathers wore stocks, ruffles, and very tight trousers; when, in fact, young men looked as if they might have stepped out from daguerrotypes, there lived in our town an Honest Wine Merchant, a German of the gentle, Goethe, Heine type, beloved and trusted by all. God rest his soul! He made of his trade a poem to uplift the hearts of men. Nothing but good he wrought, and well it is that he has passed beyond the knowledge of our reign of bloodshed, blindness and death, which today



suppliants that which was once a beneficent vocation.

This Honest Wine Merchant was a great friend of all the young bloods around him, and, whenever a sailing vessel, freighted with a precious cargo, came to rest in the James River, the Honest Wine Merchant would send his negro body servant with invitations to join him in his office above the wine cellars to sample the vintage. Such a vessel had just weighed anchor. Twice around Cape Horn she had carried her priceless cargo. This time it was a "pipe" of Burgundy. Now "pipe" is somewhat misleading. It is in reality a huge cask, or ton, such as rests in the Schloss at Heidelberg. The body servant bore the invitation, and, as usual, the young gallants came to the little office above the cellars to quaff the nectar that had been twice around Cape Horn.

"A rare wine indeed!" So spoke the Young Doctor. "I drink to the very good health of our host." He held the goblet aloft that the sun might strike through the wine, which

glowed with the color of an Irish setter's eyes. Drinking deeply, and in silence, as behooves those with real appreciation, the Young Doctor set down his glass, and, raising his ruffled hand, removed from his mustache something which clung there. Maneuvering with his fine linen handkerchief, he discovered, to his great disturbance, a long, a very long, golden hair. Hastily he set down his glass, and in so doing, beheld the Young Colonel regarding, with eyes of horror, something which lay in the fold of his fine linen handkerchief.

A wordless signal brought them together. Turning their backs upon the assembled company, they laid two golden hairs side by side upon the Young Doctor's plum-colored sleeve. Now, neither of these young men would deny that golden hair is pleasant company upon a sleeve, but not, when so mysteriously come by.

Both agreed that, painful as the task would be, they must tell the Honest Wine Merchant. So, lingering after the other guests had departed, they showed him the two golden hairs,

borne from the golden wine. To say that the good man was horrified, is to say nothing. He was distracted. He was aghast. In his sacred calling he knew nothing short of perfection. Most prayerfully he entreated the Young Doctor and the Young Colonel to accompany him at once, in order to examine the pipe of Burgundy. Together with the negro body servant, the three descended into the crypt-like cellars. Lanterns and torches threw bat shadows upon its Gothic arches. All about stood precious vintages, and lofty among the other wines, the pipe of Burgundy but lately laid down after two voyages around Cape Horn.

Removing their coats, and turning back their ruffles, the Young Doctor and the Young Colonel set to work to help the Honest Wine Merchant decant the wine. They removed the bung from near the base of the pipe and the wine pulsed out, crooning a slow melody of its own, catching the rays of lanterns and torches, as though broken rubies melted and flowed forth. All night they worked, in secret, for this

strange thing must not be known outside those grey and flickering walls, lest dishonor come to a good man and a noble trade.

Towards dawn, the gushing decreased to a slow, voluptuous murmur. Sighing, the wine at last brought forth that which made the three white men and the negro recoil beneath the leaping torch light. Gleaming golden, yet red as blood with wine, there coiled out slowly, lovingly, as a tired woman lets down her hair, a rope of golden tresses. With every leap of the wine, an added glittering strand lay upon the stone floor of the cellar. Hypnotized, they gazed, while the negro, crazed with terror, cowered against a pillar, and hid his eyes. In vain his master commanded him to take a hatchet, mount the ladder and knock out the top of the cask. At last, threats being of no avail, the Young Colonel seized an axe, and standing upon the topmost rung of the ladder, brought down a crashing blow. Having made an opening, he reached for a torch. Thrusting it into the aperture, he seemed suddenly frozen as he stood. "God's



Blood! What is it, man?" whispered the Young Doctor.

The man on the ladder beckoned, as one in a dream, and gave place so that the other could look into the cask. Nimble, the Young Doctor mounted, and he, too, seemed turned to stone while the negro moaned and rolled the whites of his eyes and called upon his Maker. The Young Doctor gave place and motioned for the Honest Wine Merchant to ascend. He, also, gazed down in horror and amazement, for upon the floor of the cask there lay naked and perfect the body of a woman.

Flung down in dreamless sleep, she lay sumptuously carved in ivory, and warmly stained with wine, deeply red her mouth and palms, and her small ears the color of a pigeon's foot. About and around, making a pillow for her head, the golden hair sprung and surged, for the pipe of Burgundy had been sealed a century before; and for a century the wine had caressed and preserved her in a glorious mausoleum.

How came she there? That will never be

known. No evidence of any violence did they find upon her splendid body, which the Young Doctor pronounced to be that of a very young girl. As the men gazed upon her, they could only surmise, each according to his inclination. Some act of love and violence, provoked by the sight of her lovely form as she had trod the wine press alone, had ended by her being thrust out of sight, the cask filled and sealed, and she, forgotten, one hundred years ago, according to the date burnt into the lid.

But what of the Honest Wine Merchant? Had this awful discovery been laid bare, his gracious work would have been defamed and he, himself, disgraced. Therefore, at dawning a covered wagon left the town. It was drawn by two spirited, astonished horses upon whom never before had such indignity been put. Nay, more, the Young Colonel, their master, who spoke to them usually as a lover to his mistress, shouted and laid whip across their satin backs. And so, carrying a strange burden, they drew rein at last beside an old graveyard.

And there were three things the Young Doctor and the Young Colonel shrank from, and yearned towards, and did so until the end of their days. Those three things were: very golden hair, old ivory, and the smell of Burgundy.

\* \* \*

Under the crepe myrtle and magnolia, beside those who sleep the years away, marked with distinguished name and pious verse, lies the stranger within our gates. The young summer moon waxes and wanes. The mocking bird casually breaks a heart with memory. The syringa scatters pure blossoms upon this unmarked grave. They do not wonder. Perhaps it is as well that we should also forget.

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## THE LOST GOVERNESS

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THE DOCTOR closed the book sadly. It was of no use. Try as they would, the three young people could not keep awake. Small wonder was it, for they had arisen at dawn on this bitter winter morning to feed stock and milk cows. As for the Doctor, he had spent the night before struggling to usher in a new life. Sleep was assaulting him fiercely. His wife arose, and, taking the book gently from his relaxing fingers, told the children to go to bed. Flushed with sleep, the three: two boys, and a girl of amazing beauty, bade their parents good night. Their kisses were long and soft with sleep, yet the staircase was mounted with rippings and scuffings of puppy play.

The Doctor's wife mended the fire of hickory logs. A sudden gust of wind blew the tallow dips sideways. The tall windows rattled, as the



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sleet and snow hurled against them. The woman snuffed the candles, and the two sat by the light of the flickering fire, showing them aged before their time, worn fine by four years of war, followed by unthinkable poverty and hardship. Beautiful people they were. Race showed in the finely set heads. Even the clumsy linsey woolsey of their garments could not disguise noble flowing lines.

"To see them grow up without education, to have to sit by and see such intellects go to waste—this is the bitterest of all!" The Doctor put his head in his hands and groaned. She drew her chair close, and put her hand upon his knee. "We do the best we can. What young people could have a better teacher than yourself, a graduate of the University of Virginia, and of Heidelberg, the finest Greek scholar of your class?"

"Yes, but if I cannot impart this knowledge. If, when I am able to be at home we are so worn out with farmwork that none of us can keep our eyes open, of what use is my stored

learning? Of what use is anything if our children must grow up ignorant? 'One generation without education, no matter what the birth-right may be, and disintegration has set in. The descent to hell is easy . . . and not always graceful'," he quoted bitterly.

"I know, my dear, I know. I try to find time to give them instruction. Of course, with the boys, I cannot do much, but with Victoria, I can help with her music. You should have heard her voice today. I do believe she has a real voice; I feel that she has a great gift." The mother's hands were trembling with excitement.

The Doctor arose and paced the floor. His limp was very marked. A bullet wound at Manassas was to be thanked for that. "All the more tragic if she has such a gift! The boys have splendid minds, and must use them doing niggers' and poor whites' work. Ah, how true, how true, the generation born of war should envy those dead upon the battlefield! If we could send them to school! If only there was a school within reach to which to send them!"

The Doctor's wife lowered her eyes, and spoke upon a forbidden subject. "If only some of your patients would pay you!" She got no further; the Doctor wheeled upon her. "They do the best they can. How can I ask a comrade in arms for payment? They have the same burdens that we have. Worse, some of them!"

His wife thought with bitterness of the sacks of potatoes, skinny fowls, berries, and very rarely, butter and eggs brought in payment for her husband's skillful healing; in payment for hours without sleep, for riding the length and breadth of two counties in all weathers—for the giving of body and soul. A country doctor? Nay, rather a soldier of Christ. Often she thought, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?"

To be the wife of the Doctor was all she asked—but the children, the splendid children. There were Paul and Theodore, who learned without effort, when they had a chance. They should be going away to school now; they were just the right age. Then, too, there was Victoria. Could it only be maternal vanity which

caused her singing voice to sound really great? The tears were running freely down the poor woman's face. The Doctor drew her up beside him.

"Come to bed, my dear. I am sorry that I was impatient." It was then they heard a knocking. Faint and timid at first, then louder, as the wind redoubled its fury and shook every loose joint and window of the old house. The Doctor's wife caught him by the shoulders. "You cannot go out again. It's impossible. You have not slept for many nights. Let them knock; do not answer."

The Doctor put her aside, but she followed him into the hall. As he opened the door the wind tore it from his hand. He stepped onto the porch. At first he could see nothing, but as his wife held the candle high, he saw huddled at his feet, a woman. Quickly he lifted her and carried her to the warmth of the fire. Together with his wife, he removed her wringing garments and wrapped her in blankets. Between her lips he forced a stimulant. Life grad-

ually returned, and they wondered what manner of being had been blown to them by the wild winds of such a night. They knew every man, woman, and child for a radius of many miles around, but this gentlewoman was a stranger.

The white skin had the pallor of long confinement. The hands were soft. Her fine, sensitive face held violet shadows beneath the eyes and in the hollow temples. It was strange to them to see her blue-black hair cut short, tonsured like a priest. When she raised fringed lids and gazed at them, the Doctor's wife cried out involuntarily, "Oh, poor thing, poor thing!" for such irrevocable sorrow dwelt in those eyes, such beseechment not to do her a hurt. Yet, those eyes of tragedy seemed to say, "If you cast me out, it will be no more than I expect."

Both the Doctor and the Doctor's wife gave her reassurance, and slowly the blood warmed within her, and with returning vitality her pitiful eyes travelled about the room. Into them came a glow and a delight impossible to be-



lieve. Clasp ing her hands upon her thin breast, she breathed one word, "Books!"

Then she closed her eyes again as one who had come out from a little death to see beloved faces bending above her. As the Doctor and his wife continued to minister to her, she again opened her amazing eyes, and her glance went from their faces back again to the book-lined walls. "It has been so long, so long . . . . you do not know!" It was the first time that she had spoken, and hers was a voice heard perhaps once in a lifetime, a voice that drew from the heart the best, the tenderest, a voice to bring life to a stone.

"You shall have all you want of them in the morning. Tonight you must rest." So, like a child, she surrendered herself to their care; and like a child she breathed in untroubled sleep when the Doctor's wife closed the bedroom door.

The morning dawned in glory. Brilliant sunshine erased all trace of the storm. Almost there was a touch of spring in the air. The Doctor's

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wife discovered the first crocus, as she came from the dairy through the tall box walks of her garden. It was not until she entered the house that she heard the celestial singing. She clasped her hands and stood stricken with beauty. Yes, that was Victoria's voice, soaring up and away, beyond any notes her teaching had been able to induce. As a nightingale scatters melody, so the young voice threw golden largess beyond all hopes and dreams. And all the while it was supported by a deep contralto, urging it upward with tender insistence. Behind the second voice ran the accompaniment drawn from the ancient piano by the hands of an artist.

“As the sunflower turns to her god when he sets,  
The same look that she turned when he rose,”

sang the glorious voice of the girl.

The Lady sat at the piano, and Victoria stood beside her, hands behind her back, shoulders held at correct angle and diaphragm poised. In the midst of a note she was halted. “No, no, my

child it is so." The Lady struck a chord and held it. "Place your notes true, exactly in the middle." She turned as the Doctor's wife entered. "Forgive me, perhaps I have taken a liberty. This dear child, she has a voice from heaven, but she has not been well taught. I . . . I love to teach."

Thus, simply and naturally began years of beautiful association, for it came to pass that the Lady stayed and taught the Doctor's children, and was deeply beloved by them all. Unbelievable as it may seem, she never told them who she was. They never asked her; partly, perhaps, from an inborn restraint against asking personal questions, and partly because she had come, it would seem, as an answer to prayer. Almost she might have been born of their desperate need, and she took her place in the family as gently, as graciously, as she did all else.

Soon the Doctor and his wife realized they had among them a rare intelligence, and what was still more rare, a real teacher. She was a

musician, a linguist, and a martinet with her three young pupils. So, the years sped by, and not for one day did she relax her hold on their eager young minds. Around the schoolroom table, she strove, until Paul and Theodore were ready for the university, and Victoria knew all she had to teach her, and could lift up her voice in three languages.

Quietly one night she said: "They know all I can teach them. I have given them all I had. They must go forward." Turning at the door, she gazed over the beloved heads, and her voice held renunciation and fear.

Next morning she was gone. Gone as she had come, for there was a great storm that night, just such a storm as had raged the night of her coming. In vain the Doctor directed posses who scoured the country for her. There were no telephones to help in the search. He wore himself to skin and bone. She was gone without trace. No, not without trace, for she had left a living memory in the young minds she had led to know the uses of learning.

Great audiences beyond the seas acclaimed Victoria's golden voice, but it was with a certain few old songs that she drew them to their feet in a frenzy of applause.

"Sweet Amaryllis, by a spring's sweet side,"

she sang, and envisioned a cool spring house deep in Virginia pines, and her mother skimming great crocks of milk.

"As the sunflower turns to her god when he sets,  
The same look . . . .",

but over the heads of her stamping, clapping audience, Victoria saw a line of giant sunflowers nodding over the rail fence of the vegetable garden.

It was when the girl stepped down to the very edge of the stage, with drums beating in her throat, that she began passionately and low, the homely lines:

"I wish I was in de land of cott'n,  
Cinn'mon seed, and sandy bott'm";



It was then they went wild with delight and rose and sang with her the song that is the whole world's anthem. And when her soaring voice ended on the last,

"Away, away, away down South in Dixie,"

they wondered why her radiant face was wet with tears—tears for one who had given her so much and who had gone she knew not where.

With his children started successfully in the world, the Doctor devoted himself to bettering conditions in his native State. His work became more general; and, more and more recognized as he was, he was constantly called upon to sit in consultation, and serve on boards and commissions concerned with the public health. On one occasion while walking down the desolate corridors of a State institution, accompanied by nurses and orderlies, and entering the wing which housed the more violent of the patients, he heard a sound, which halted him and froze him into a listening attitude. From a nearby cell, sweet and thin, as if all strength had been

drained from the sound and only the mocking of melody left, there floated a song. It was hardly a song. It carried the semblance of a tune, but in wretched whine was but a travesty on that daintiest of ballads.

"Sweet Amaryllis, by a spring's sweet side,"

quavered the voice, then broke off in peal after peal of maniac laughter. The superintendent, a woman, whose face told nothing, spoke out and said: "That is a most unusual case. She came here long before my time. Then she escaped and disappeared for five years—completely lost. Sometime ago she reappeared and asked to be taken back for fear she would injure someone. She has been like this ever since." "And her name?" he asked. "We never knew it," she replied. "They tell me years ago she was brought here gagged and bound and left in the night. Sometimes she is quite gentle—but they are the worst kind, of course."

They paused before a barred door. In the centre of the room stood the Lost Governess,

bound and handcuffed, swaying back and forth to the lilt of her song. The Doctor motioned an orderly to open the door and stepped into the cell. "Take off those things," he said to him, pointing to the manacled hands. Sudden laughter pealed forth, and there was a springing lunge forward. "Look out, Doctor, look out!" warned the nurse. There was an impact against him, a sharp pain, and blood flowed down his cheek. "She just missed your eyes, Doctor. They always go for the eyes." They stepped back into the corridor, and the superintendent pulled the door to, smartly, and shot the heavy bolts.

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## THE WEDDING

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**M**OST PEOPLE regard a grandfather as a remote ancestor, one who has long since been lost in the mazes of antiquity. The writer is more fortunate, for mine was the most fascinating comrade of my youth. I look back, and I look forward, and I find no more perfect companionship, no deeper wisdom, no finer charity nor understanding.

And what he knew of poor human nature! How he condoned human weakness, how he tempered the wind of public opinion to the shorn lamb trembling in the blast of scandal! Then we had no patter of fixations, phobias, reactions, and physicists, yet he was the wisest psychiatrist I have ever known.

From him I have heard stories of love lost, of love stolen, of trust betrayed, of gallantry beneath the rose in a garden far above suspicion,

and of the lie of an honorable gentleman. I have heard tales of the self-immolation of one woman, the deceit of another—a colorful fabric of amazing sin, of lofty deeds. One thing, however, he never told—the names of the actors in these life dramas. Of all this breathless romance, none of the stories intrigued me so much as that of a certain well-known marriage. Perhaps it was his quiet utterance, when I begged him to tell me the names of those participating in the tragedy, that made me love it best.

“No, granddaughter, I cannot tell you, but you know their grandchildren.” So all my life, I have been wondering, “Are these they?” Here and there and everywhere this question arises. One encounters them all through life, certain ones who seem to lack the vital spark; to be so arrogantly dead. Beautiful, artistocratic, with race in every line, and promising so much, yet congenitally unable to fulfill any promise of humanity. Impossible it is to look past their cold eyes into hearts; for the warm surge which should have called life into being is not there.

As "Dracula" tells us of the "un-dead," so a family moves among us brought into being by the "un-loved." Would it not be much the same if so penetrating a question arose as this suggests? How long would the leaven of a loveless marriage work in a community? Would such leaven destroy the capacity for love in those henceforth to be born of such marriage, so that slightly perverted, delicately decadent, they would mate with normality and create further tragedy? If so, how fast would nature work to put back the human equilibrium?

In pondering this and wondering, the following story got itself written, while a passing bell seemed to toll the profound mandate, cleaving, with its warning, the tender innocence, the young beauty, of many marriages: "I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it."



The organ whispers, tunefully classic. The bride is iridescent among her maids. The bridegroom is but a tender cypher. The candles burn steadily upward. The flowers swoon perfume. The clergyman goes on in Episcopal resonance, with only a slight dramatic pause, after that "just cause or impediment." Should one rise in that perfumed assembly, and cry, "Stop! I know of so just a cause, so terrible an impediment, that not only will two hearts go stumbling all their days, but from them a generation will be born without love, with a handicap of frustration, which will cause them to live coldly and heartlessly among you, until the years' blessed alchemy wipes out the tragedy you are now helping to create."

No, this is never done, and should one so dare he would be thrust from such a privileged gathering as a madman. Knowledge of a crime done in the body is the one thing that justifies such a step. The slow bleeding to death of two hearts would not sanctify so unseemly an interruption.

Never a wedding but I recall the story told me by my grandfather—an amazing incident, a preview into tragedy, a secret he carried all his days. This is the story my grandfather told me of what happened to him at the great ball or rout which celebrated the opening of the Ballard House in Richmond.

This was the hotel located at Fourteenth and Franklin Streets. If any, now alive, recall it, it is only as a shelter for the wretched and homeless, fallen from its high estate. When Grandfather was a youth of seventeen, it was the last word in luxurious appointments. In fact, when the doors were thrown open and a great ball given to entertain the fairest flower and chivalry of the State, the town was all agog. Think of it. Actually there were red rep over-curtains, with the best Irish point lace ones beneath. These sumptuous draperies hung from massive, gold-leaf cornices. Upon the floors were velvet carpets, and on the walls gilt mirrors and pictures. There was ornate rosewood and mahogany furniture upholstered in the finest damask, and

real linen, china and silver. It was madness! Hitherto a tavern had been a place to take horse and away from as soon as might be. This was like a gentleman's home; a newfangled notion, and likely to ruin those who had put money into such wasteful extravagance. So prognosticated the older generation. In spite of them, it lived and flourished, as in spite of the older generation daring ventures do live and flourish.

At the time of this great ball, Grandfather was seventeen. Even an indistinguishable daguerreotype makes one think of the lines, "He trod the ling, like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in rest!" As one turns the old leather case this way and that to try to catch some of that vanished gallantry, it can be seen that Grandfather was beautifully arrayed for this first sortie into the gay life of the town. The power and the glory of those garments! The trousers were a creamy fawn color, and fitted his legs like the tights of an old-fashioned ballet dancer. His coat was the color of a blue-bottle fly on a sunny morning, and corseted

snugly his slender waist. It had flat, silver buttons, which caught the light and winked coquettishly. Like the petals of lilies, the ruffles of his fine linen shirt curled from beneath his stock. The stock held up his young chin, giving him an appearance of swagger he did not feel. "I saw young Harry with his beaver up!" That was his tall grey silk hat. The last, and greatest glory was the black Malacca cane with its golden top.

Nor, mark you, had this grandeur been evolved from even the worthiest Main Street tailor. It had come all the way from Mr. Peel in Oxford Street, London. Mr. Peel who was "Haberdasher to H.R.H. The Prince of Wales." So said Mr. Peel's boxes, which had brought over this delight in the hold of the good ship, *Maria Anderson*, then anchored off shore in James River. Mr. Peel also had the Lion and the Unicorn, and the three white plumes on his boxes to prove it. Also, for the first time my Grandfather had been valeted by his father's body servant, as befits a young man about town.

Not even Mammy had dared lay hands upon him, but had stood afar off in awe. This night he had passed a Rubicon. This night he felt himself indeed a man.

Midnight found him strolling through the great drawing-rooms, a trifle dizzy from tinkling sweet music, and the holding of many fragrant armsful of organdie and lace, taffeta and satin; armsful that tossed side curls, lowered lashes, and cooed as they moved through the steps of a polka. Some, there were, who held up parted, carmined lips and drew so close that a white dust of orris and violet became evident upon his sleeve. Squaring his shoulders, he brushed it away, and with it all thoughts of those sweet charmers; for was he not dedicated to one woman forever and always?

Gliding with these chits of girls, he had dared raise his eyes, as that other floated by him, in the arms of one blessed by the gods. For gossip linked the name of the great beauty with this gallant. Too exalted for jealousy the boy regarded them as twin constellations. His wor-

ship was pure and clean as the wind, untainted by hope of possession, a light to lighten the turmoil in his adolescent blood. The drawing-rooms deserted, he stepped into the recesses of a deep window, drawing the heavy, red curtains together behind him. Here in this dim cubicle he could watch the moon scudding through midnight clouds; here, in quietness, allow the pure spirit of his adoration to rise as incense.

It was then he heard them enter, those two splendid beings. My grandfather parted the curtains, and was about to make his presence known, when he saw the man go down upon his knees before the gleaming vision in white. During the moment of horror when he knew retreat cut off, he felt the coldness of her beauty, even though poppies, red as blood, mingled with her raven curls. Slowly she waved a fan, carmined as an open wound. Midst the tempest of his adoration something fell upon him, still and cold. The white of her gown chilled him. The slow moving, crimson fan splashed it with heart's blood.



Wild with the shame of eavesdropping, yet unable to escape, Grandfather, perforce, heard what he had imagined, in this passionate interlude, would be words of love. Instead, upon his unbelieving ears there fell a man's pleading, the pleading of a prisoner for escape. "I beseech you to hear me. Have pity, and give me back my promise!" What a litany!

Slowly the great beauty waved her red fan. Not a quiver of emotion marred the perfection of her face. On and on continued the man's voice as ardent in its anguish as if he were begging for love and not release. Against the stone wall of her beauty he dashed out his heart.

His words of pain were too terrible to be remembered separately. They were coagulated agony. The story of the Gorgon's head, beholding which, men were turned to stone, recalled itself to my grandfather. At last the man arose from his knees. "And you would hold me to a loveless bond? You will marry me knowing I have given heart and soul to another woman?" The great beauty answered, "I will not have

them say that I, the toast of the Old Dominion, have been jilted." The man's voice became a little mad with hope. "Madam, you do not hold me for love, merely for pride. Ah then, be gracious to me! Spurn me. Scorn me. Make me a laughing stock before all Virginia, as you have done so many others . . . if so, you set me free!"

A deadly thing it was, said my grandfather, for a woman to have so few words, to be so implacable. In the passing moments before she answered, it seemed that the thundering hearts of the two men must be heard each by the other. When at last the great beauty spoke she spat the other woman's name. At the sound of it my grandfather said he fell upon a great wonder that such could be, for the name was that of a dovelike wee thing. Nay, a dove preens and glistens in the sunlight. Rather this other was a brown wren of a girl, a quiet creature, never to be noticed beside the great beauty. It was to make her his, that this finest of all gallants was begging for his freedom, more des-

perately than he would deign to beg an adversary for his life. The beauty flung back her curls, laughing as no woman should be heard to laugh. "That girl? Now indeed I know you must be mad!"

For a fraction of time my grandfather said he thought some dreadful thing would happen, so strange, so vengeful was the look upon the face of the woman, so devoid of hope the face of the man, but he only bowed, and holding aside the velvet portiere for her to pass, let it fall softly behind them.

And Grandfather wore to the wedding his fine clothes made by Mr. Peel in Oxford Street, London. During the weeks that had passed, since that dreadful night, wherein he had unwittingly learned this dark secret, he had felt something must happen to prevent. Had he not been taught that God was merciful and just?

Nevertheless, there sat my grandfather between his mother in her crinolines and beautiful white paisley shawl, and his father in habiliments like his own, one and all of the three

clothed in their wedding garments. Upon entering the church they had sunk upon their knees, his father and himself holding their beaver hats before their faces, by way of greeting to the Deity, his mother accosting Him through primrose kid gloves.

In spite of the knowledge the boy carried like ice about his heart, in spite of his young pity and horror, this wedding was going to take place here and now in that church.

The organ changed from a sweet wandering melody to a thunder of purpose, and the people all turned toward the aisle. The bride glided past and was joined by the bridegroom at the chancel steps. Grandfather gripped the top of the pew in front of him. It was just then he saw the other woman . . . that brown wren of a woman, and he knew that he looked upon such strength and gentleness as he would never again see equalled. Almost he could vision her heart, as it flew from her breast and hovered in benediction over those two kneeling figures.

The organ relapsed into a sweet murmur. The

inimitable diction of the wedding service began. Many waters seemed rushing, carrying him along, and he longed to cry out. "If any man can show just cause, why these two shall not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace." My grandfather thought he must have cried aloud; faces turned towards him. His father frowned. His mother stole her hand into his, thinking how sweetly moved he was, but he had only made a gasping sound.

The organ pealed forth in triumph. The deed was done. He looked across the church for the other woman. She was smiling and greeting friends. She was saying with the rest of them what a "beautiful bride she made." Years afterwards, Grandfather said, he was helping to carry a mortally wounded man off the field of Gettysburg, a man whose vitals had been torn from him; and the wounded man's smile suddenly brought back the vision of the inside of a church, the sound of the wedding march, and the look on a woman's face.

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## THE CHINESE LADY

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SOMEWHERE in memory, I am sitting at a glittering dinner table. Voices of my elders talk of matters I am supposedly unable to understand. With every listening nerve quivering at attention, I hear this conversation:

"She dared him to climb a tall pine tree at the edge of Lover's Leap at the White Sulphur. The limb broke, and he fell hundreds of feet below to his death." "Why do you suppose he did it?" "I can't imagine." "They had everything to live for. The wedding day not six weeks off, and she so golden, so blue-eyed, with a skin like peaches and cream. Such a horse-woman! So accomplished in every way!" So the talk, with much wonder as to the whys and the wherefores, shuttled back and forth above my head.

At his end of the table my grandfather kept



silent, and because he was silent, I knew that with a few words he could put an end to the wonderment; for when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, my grandfather, I know, will be revealed as one who guarded innumerable of them. In memory, time is not. My next recollection is of a box, and the contents thereof. This box contained a large cotton muffler, made of blue and white checked gingham and overlaying and glorifying the homely thing was such embroidery as is seldom seen, covering almost every inch of the cotton cloth, making it brilliant with silken flowers. On seeing it any woman would at once have asked the question, "Why put such work on a cheap bandana?" The only other article in the box was a slender, silver dagger of exquisite craftsmanship.

Among the earliest American naval officers to enter China was a certain young Virginian lieutenant commander, Richmond born and bred. His were the heart and bearing of the true sailor, the far-seeing eye, the golden hair,

the voice that charmed . . . . only to sail away. His sea duty was upon the Admiral's flagship, and, as an aide, he attended upon the Admiral, when, for the first time in history, China gave hospitality to the Occidental. And so it came to pass that these American officers now entered the glittering palaces of old China, hitherto inviolate and invulnerable. They ate her strange foods, drank her heady wines, but never once laid eyes upon the high-class women of the household. Received, as were these men of the western world with unsurpassed courtesy, yet were these most precious, most exquisite of all Chinese possessions withheld from their eyes. Having dined upon unknown foods, the Admiral and his aides arose from the table of a great Mandarin. High Chinese officials were there to meet them. All who had sat down were men, but during the feasting the young midshipman had been vastly intrigued by dovelike sounds, by the rustling of silks from behind a carved ivory screen high-placed about a gallery.

The electric certainty that women were near,

though unseen, quickened their blood. And so it was. As a most unusual privilege the wives and concubines of the Mandarin had been permitted to secrete themselves behind the ivory screen that they might watch the foreign devils while they banqueted.

After the well-nigh endless ceremony of farewell, fan waving, and gift bestowing had been accomplished, our young lieutenant was about to pass from the palace. It was then that a hand reached out and plucked the checked bandana handkerchief from about his neck. For some reason he did not speak of the incident. Perhaps he imagined it to be a practical joke on the part of one of his brother officers. In fact, he thought little of it, until called from the messroom the day following.

The battleship lay at anchor in the harbor, and as he stepped out on deck a sailor designated a sampan alongside. Standing in the boat was a Chinese. The young Virginian ordered a rope ladder lowered; and the native servant came over the side like a cat, prostrating him-

self as he reached the deck. To the lieutenant he handed a small package intricately folded in rice paper, gave a last salaam, and disappeared over the side of the ship. The lieutenant held in his hand his bandana handkerchief, glorified almost beyond recognition, embroidered lavishly with flowers in every shade and color. Turning it over he saw that it was the same, on both sides, in intricate workmanship. All had been done in less than twenty-four hours.

It was abundantly evident that this young man had a wise propensity for keeping his affairs to himself, for he did not acquaint the rest of the mess with his unusual gift. Whom he did consult is not known, but it was as his sailor's heart had guessed. The flowers bore a message. He was to come to a door in the wall of the Mandarin's palace at a certain hour of that same night.

And so began this idyl in a Chinese garden with the tiny wife of the aged Mandarin. Thus came to this young Virginian such delight, such delicacy and refinement of love, that to the end

of his days, women of the West were as coarse food to his emotional palate. Also, for the first time, this Chinese lady of high rank had gazed upon an Anglo-Saxon, had seen blue eyes and golden hair, and her heart had gone out to this man of alien blood, had dared beyond the ivory screen which for centuries had hidden women of her race.

In those early days the Chinese of the upper classes were unknown to us of the western world; we had seen only the coolie class; and it is impossible to describe the delicate loveliness of this Chinese girl, hardly more than a child, just past her fifteenth birthday. In her own language her name meant "Flower of Love," and indeed she must have been more flower than woman. She was the perfect product of centuries of women trained only for delight. It was all she knew: to speak the language of love in a voice modulated by an artist; to anoint her opalescent body; tinting it to an even more fragile beauty; to enhance her hair and eyes with fragrant kohl—placing, above all,

the desires of her lord and the art of the caress. For generations, she had been taught only this, and to her young American lover she now gave her century-old cult of love.

Small wonder is it that his head was turned almost to madness. His duties aboard ship meant only the passing of time until night fell, when he might knock upon that door; knock upon that door and be silently admitted; pass swiftly between night blooming blossoms to her summer house, while the nightingale sang its own passionate obligato. The American battleship lay in eastern waters full long; and ever through those love-drenched nights the young Virginian lived a dream, such as is rarely bestowed except a man oversteps reason.

Then one night he knocked, and the door swung open; and as he stepped inside he was seized by invisible hands—seized, and, in silence, bound hand and foot, and a gag placed between his teeth. So he was brought to an inner courtyard. On a great throne sat the Mandarin, his wives and his concubines, his entire house-



hold about him. In the clear light of the moon the young Virginian recognized where he was, and as swiftly told himself that this now was death. No word was spoken. He stood before the Mandarin, who ceremoniously inclined his head in greeting, and opened his jewelled fan. At his raising it slightly above his head as in signal, an embroidered curtain in front of an archway lifted, and attendants brought forth his little love, and stood her in the midst of those assembled. In gorgeous trappings of white and silver like a bride, her hair bound with pearls and waxen camelias, she had not neglected the most intricate artifice to enhance her beauty. Never had he seen her so lovely, nor sensed about her such a dignity, such a gentle pride of bearing. Futilely he struggled against his captors, for now he knew that something far more appalling than death was to go forward before his eyes. As he strained towards her, she turned up her face to him and smiled. At that the fiendish rite began. They disrobed her without a sound. Those who watched might have

been a group carved in stone. For the first and perhaps the last time the women of the Mandarin's household were allowed to breathe night air, in order that they might see what befell the ladies of China when they were faithless.

In the silence they brought her so close to him that he could sense the perfume, the ineffable perfume, she always used. Even the nightingale was silent before this horror. Slowly the Mandarin descended from his throne. Turning back his embroidered sleeves, he reached for the silver dagger always carried by the young lieutenant, and with this dagger he cleaved his love in twain from the brow downward, disembowelling her before his eyes, and as she fell at his feet the Mandarin thrust back into the American's belt his silver dagger drenched with her blood. Then the door in the wall was opened and he was flung outside.

The ship was well out at sea before he came to himself, held down in his raving by the strong hands of his sailors. So with the dagger and embroidered handkerchief, he came home.

He was but a boy of twenty when this happened, and he had well reached man's estate before he became engaged to the golden girl, whose beauty was the pride of her State. Indeed, said the men about his club and racing stable, he was a lucky man, and gladly would one and all of them have changed places with him. Therefore, it did seem strange that when she sat upon her horse there high above the world, and said, "I dare you," he dared most willingly, most quietly to go to his death. I have the dagger, and the handkerchief.

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## NEGRO FOOT

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**A**LONGSIDE one of our main highways, there is fixed a crude sign. It bears the words, "Negro Foot." All day and all night the traffic sweeps over this road, which is one of the leading arteries of our great country. Unheeding, unknowing, it passes what is the grave of an unknown hero at a desolate, sordid cross-road relieved only by a gaudy gas station. Perhaps, now and then, while refueling or taking a cold drink, from a tipped-up bottle, the tourist may let his eye fall upon the sombre words "Negro Foot," and idly wonder. If from north of the Mason and Dixon line, he will attribute the strange name to some whim of these quaint and unaccountable Southerners.

This crossroad with its sign and its gas station, was once part of a gentleman's estate, which, granted by the English king, descended

from father to son, making rich those who owned its fertile acres and prolific slaves. Fire and poverty have long since taken the great mansion, laying waste its barns and stables. Goldenrod and Jimson weed grow over its famous race course. Owls call from the locust, growing strong and green in what was once My Lady's garden.

The first master had brought his dainty bride from England, that they might live their spacious life together, graciously, and, in the end, lie peacefully at rest in the abbey beneath the cedars. No more beneficent life could have been devised for them by a benevolent Church of England deity, who, along with other manifold blessings had ordained that the black man should be the white man's slave, his hewer of wood, his drawer of water, his lesser self, so filled with uncanny understanding of his moods and wishes, as ofttimes to save the white master the trouble of speech.

The young Lord of the Manor, who lived and moved, and had his most exquisite being in his

great house about the year 1850, sat in his library one night in early autumn. The book-lined walls, the portraits, the massive furniture, danced in high lights from the blazing hickory logs. The master stretched his tall length luxuriously. That day the hounds had met for the first time, the first run of the season. The swing, and flying leap of his hunter beneath him still tingled in his blood. From a massive silver tray beside him, he raised a decanter, cut and gleaming like diamonds in the rosy glow. Pouring himself a drink, he stood, and raising the goblet, drank to the woman smiling down upon him from the portrait above the mantel. His eagle face softened, as he performed this nightly ceremony, and above his black satin stock his fine mouth smiled into the dancing eyes of the portrait, his young wife—and he, her lover still, though she held upon the blue velvet of her knee their son, now three years old.

On their last trip to England, he had caused a great artist to paint her so, clad in the robes in which she had made her bow before young



Queen Victoria. When the work had been nearly finished, she had drawn her little son against her breast, and vowed she would not pose another minute unless he were included in the picture. The result was enchanting. She lay sleeping in the room above, and, though he would soon go to her, he gazed as if newly fascinated at the winsome face framed in auburn ringlets, the fair shoulders rising from their laces and jewels, at the tiny waist, from which the folds of sea-blue velvet sprung away to join the enormous length of her court train of silver cloth. Leaning against the mother's magnificence was their small son, so much a mingling in feature and expression of them both, proudly garbed in kilt and claymore and tartan of the Scottish clan from which sprung his great line. The father and husband seemed unable to take his eyes from these his most precious possessions, with such magic had the artist given them to him afresh. Lowering the central lamp, with its myriad crystal pendants, he thought of her asleep there above him in the massive four-

poster, hung with its draperies of primrose damask, of how she would be all-gathered up like a sleeping flower, of how he would first have to waken Mammy, who nightly slept across her threshold until he came. His was a man's day of horse and tavern, of hard riding about his estates, of law, of court, and of gambling. Day ended; night came with tenderness. His somewhat saturnine face softened, as he put taper to wax candle.

It was then that the great stillness of the night struck his consciousness, and he realized that for hours he had heard only the sighing of the autumn wind. Usually a banjo twanged, a voice from the quarters raised inimitable melody, or bursts of ebo laughter made him smile to himself tolerantly. Tonight all seemed ominously black and still, as if in waiting; and recollection of rumors arrogantly thrust aside, as poor-white-trash talk, chilled him. One of the hounds at his feet gave forth a muted note, and the hair rose upon the creature's back. The master stepped over to a cabinet, and took out a case con-

aining a brace of duelling pistols. It was then a black shadow parted the crimson velvet curtains, and his body servant, born of the same day, of the same hour, suckled at the same dark bosom, beckoned to him. The negro shook from head to foot, and from his ashen lips came the words, "Your horse, marster, your horse!"

The white man gave him a look of affectionate scorn, yet all the while in his inmost heart dread of that black soundlessness from the quarters invaded him. He stepped close to the negro, holding the candle high. "Speak out, you rascal. What is it?" The only answer was a repetition, whispered as the sound of dry leaves shaking. "Your horse, marster, your horse!" The white man set down the candle, and handed one of the pistols to the servant, "Go to your mistress' door. Do not let me find you alive if harm come to my wife and son."

He found his mare saddled and waiting, a very swift and great lady, daughter of a line of famous race horses. One touch of her bridle, one word in her ear, and they were off across

country, over fences and gates, more like something winged than horse and rider. Although still impatient with unbelief, for he had the white man's scorn of the negroes' ever consolidating, ever obtaining leadership, sufficiently, to do any real harm, yet he knew his first duty was to warn the white population, to gather together the landowners, and so swiftly, so dreadfully, to punish, that never again would those foolish black children attempt revolt. As he rode he thought of the improbability of any real trouble. He thought too of his body servant, who had risked his life to warn him; for he knew that, swift and cruel as was the white man's revenge, it would be nothing to that to be wreaked upon the black by his own race.

History has never recorded the happenings of that night of riding. At dawn, the gentlemen of the countryside and their tenant farmers drew reign upon the courthouse green. Shackled together were the negro ringleaders. Terrible were the faces of the white men, for though slight as the uprising had been, buildings and

cattle had burned, and white women terrorized. It had gone so far that never again would the black man dare, never again, after what would now go forward before the sun rose on a new day.

Foremost of them all, the young master sat upon his horse, and directed a ghastly retribution; for he had returned to find his wife and son gone. Desperate search had failed to reveal a trace of them, or of the slave left to guard them, and so by the time he and his band of white men surrounded the ringleaders, bringing them shackled to the courthouse green, his loss and horror had made of him a maniac, maddened by the thought that he himself had trusted his wife and child to an African fiend, by a vision of something worse than death that had ended the flame of life which had been his, by the sound of her calling to him in her agony, thinking he had deserted her.

That livid mask, that snarling voice of his, were those of a madman, yet very still he sat upon his horse, directing, pointing with his

whip, as if those herded before him had been cattle. Indeed, cattle would have been slaughtered more gently, for that had happened which dehumanizes the white man against the black. Little did it matter that the rising had been immediately stamped out. The slave had presumed. That his ringleader, his instigator, had been white, scum of the lowest class, availed him nothing now.

When they brought the body servant before the young master, when he saw, for the first time, since trusting his all to him, his black foster brother, the white men turned away in horror from what he ordered to be done. The negro, hearing his doom, writhed in agony, yet, bound and gagged as he was, until his eyes started from his head, at that command, struggled free of his captors and flung himself under the very hoofs of his master's horse. His supplication, his entreating eyes pierced the human consciousness of a nearby kinsman of his owner, who reined up beside the implacable husband and father, saying, "Loose him, and let him



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speak." A snarl was his only answer, but again the older man laid his hand upon the bridle of his young kinsman, and said, "Before you make it impossible! I tell you that you will be sorry if you do not let him speak."

They unbound the slave, and with a great cry in which welled all the forgiveness of his race he called out, "in de ole ice house, Marster. Jesus, my Save'yer, I done hid em in de ole ice house."

With her safe, with his son upon his knee, his wife told him how, when the mob had beat upon the door, the slave had carried them out through a secret stairway and hidden them safely, and then to avoid suspicion, had left them and joined the insurrection.

In each other's arms, these two planned great reward for him who had been loyal unto death, to whom they owed all life to come. But when the young master arose and went in search of him, and called to him, he did not answer. When at last he came upon him, lying in the goldenrod and bracken, men of his own race

had cut off his hands and his feet; and the young master could only hold him in his arms until he died.

The spot was known as "Nigger Foot," and so it is called to this day.

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## THE RAKE

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HE WAS always there when the family returned from church, seated in an easy chair, a tall glass of toddy in winter, an iced julep in summer, held in his shaking hand, his macabre figure stretched at ease, his head laid back, for all the world as if he owned us. In memory he stands out, a black and white etching. Over six feet tall, and appallingly thin, his frock coat green at the seams, and his linen frayed, and none too immaculate, he had yet an elegance which persisted, in spite of penury and drunkenness.

He was always greeted as if his weekly advent was an honored surprise. A place was laid for him at dinner, after which he slept before the fire until late Sunday supper, of which he also partook, leaving at last, punctilious in his adieus, and slightly reeling. What became of him, or

how he lived during the week, I never took the trouble to ask, nor in my hard young heart did I care, for I loathed the sight of him with all the passionate, false pride of adolescence.

Upon one midwinter Sunday, the edict went forth that the weather was too bad for church. Full-fed on chicken hash and waffles, I arose from the breakfast table rejoicing. It had snowed all night and, bitter cold, was now turning to sleet. All that one could do was to gaze out from the parlor window upon Franklin Street, grey and deserted, and curl down deliciously beside the fire, and read the "Heavenly Twins," which had been forbidden as corrupting to one's morals. This I did, and found them correspondingly dull.

When summoned by the dinner gong and descending to the basement dining room, I realized with a lightness of heart that my *bête noire*, for the first time in years, was not there. It was too good to be true, to be able to eat Sunday dinner without averting my gaze from those famished eyes, from those shaking white hands,

“For these and all thy mercies, etc.”, pronounced my grandfather, and we sank into our chairs, as a shining blade made the first incision in a mammoth bronze turkey.

“Where do you suppose Dick can be?” asked my grandfather, and the silence of the others of the family revealed to me that my feelings were being shared by those around me, a realization sweet indeed to my young soul. “I feel concerned about him,” added my gentle grandmother. “He has no fire in his room. Do you think it was cold enough last night for him to freeze to death?” It was then in the naughtiness of my soul that I voiced, what, to this day, fills me with shame: “I hope he did!”

My grandfather gave me one look, but it was enough. He said no word, but that look cast me out of Paradise. No Lucifer shooting through space, fell more swiftly. All through dinner he ignored me. I crawled up to my bedroom, lower in my own estimation than the worm that dieth not. I flung myself upon my bed, and must have slept, for I was awakened by my

grandfather entering my room and softly closing the door. I arose, and with a rush, hid my face upon his coat, ready to confess my sin and tell him how grievous was the memory of it.

Seating himself, he drew me down upon his knee, and smoothing back my hair said, "My little girl, I have something to tell you which will hurt you . . . . Poor Dick is dead. For the want of a fire, he was found frozen this morning in his room."

Since those grave words, so gently spoken, great sorrows have come to me, but never such remorse as at that moment. The knowledge, that, at the very time I had carelessly wished that lonely death the sad derelict had lain unconscious from cold and want, overwhelmed me, and I wept with shame.

At last, somewhat quieted, I sat upon the hearthrug, leaning my head against my grandfather's knee, and he told me the story of Dick, from then on thought of by me as the Rake. "You only saw the last ruined years of his life. Like the jewel in the toad's forehead, there is



always in every life a redeeming incident. Try always to remember this, and temper your judgment.

"It is difficult to imagine, is it not," continued my grandfather, "that in his youth our poor friend had all that life has to offer. He was rich, with broad acres and slaves. He owned famous horses. His great house"—and here he mentioned an estate now in possession of a Northern capitalist—"was the scene of such entertaining as has never been equalled. The ball-room had twelve Venetian glass chandeliers, each holding one hundred wax tapers; the walls were mirrors from floor to ceiling. In this ball-room was given a great rout, to which came, as the guest of honor, no less a personage than His Royal Highness Edward, Prince of Wales. I can see him now, his Order of the Garter glittering across his breast. Beside him stood Dick, princely himself in his beauty and arrogant bearing. And the ladies . . . well, maybe I'd better not go into that."

"Oh Grandfather, please, please . . . did

he ever marry any of them?" "It is about that I am going to tell you, and it is what makes me say that in every life you can find unselfish beauty of conduct; and our poor friend was no exception. He travelled extensively, and was, in fact, a citizen of the great world. When at home he lived in his mansion high above the James River, but he had many houses. One autumn he was induced to rent one of his estates to a gentleman from New England. He would never have consented, but this gentleman had a young daughter dying of consumption, and he had hopes that the more gentle climate of Virginia would restore his only child to health. At any rate," pursued my grandfather, gazing thoughtfully at the glowing end of his cigar, "there they were, next door neighbors.

"Gallant gentleman that he was, Dick hardly let a day pass that he did not ride over, jump the rail fence, and trot his horse up to the veranda to sit beside the girl in the sunshine. As time went on, brilliance came back to her eyes, a flush to her cheeks, and carmine to her

lips, but it was not the climate of Virginia that put them there. It was the sound of Dick's inimitable voice, calling gay greeting above the thud of his horse's hoofs, the beauty of his face, his tender solicitude for her restoration to health, as he daily bent above her couch and looked into her eyes, looked as he always did into the eyes of any woman, be she hag or beauty, purely from habit. He meant no harm. His adoring glance was merely a tribute to her sex. No gentleman looked at woman otherwise.

"However, it appears that in the far North, from whence came the girl, such looks are rare, or, if given and received, can mean but one thing; and as the days went by her eyes grew larger and more brilliant; her cheeks brighter, and her body more wasted. One morning, as Dick breakfasted, the butler announced his neighbor awaiting him in the library. Fearing the daughter had taken a turn for the worse, he hurried to join the poor gentleman. His worst fears seemed justified, for he found the father in a state of agitation, pitiful to behold. Leading

him to a chair Dick begged to be told his trouble. Was the dear girl worse, he asked, might he saddle his swiftest horse and fetch the doctor? He was his to command . . . completely at his service.

"At this, the poor heartbroken father grasped his hands, and shamedly, stumblingly, the tears rolling down his face, sought to say what must have been agony for him; sought to ask an unthinkable thing for the sake of his child who was dying; and then it was that it dawned upon the gallant Dick that he had been misunderstood, that all unwittingly he had won love for himself and caused pain. 'It would not be for long,' went on the father's trembling voice; and all the chivalry within the younger man rose up. Bowing deeply, he led the old gentleman to the window, where upon the lawn, his body servant led another thoroughbred up and down awaiting his master's pleasure. 'Dear Sir,' he said, 'you but anticipated me. See! My horse is now saddled that I might ride over and ask for the honor of your daughter's hand.' "

“Did he love her? Not as he had loved many a woman to her shame and sorrow. Perhaps he came to love her as we love that for which we sacrifice much. It was the first and the last unselfish gesture of his wild, wasted life, and for the short time left to her he gave her such tenderness, such devotion, he led a life of such purity and soberness for her sake, that the tavern, and the women more fair and kind than wise, knew him not. His Sabbatical year, it was, one of cleanness and beauty from out his whole ruined life.”

Grandfather paused and stroked my hair. “I wish I could tell you that the pure rapture of her departed spirit hovered over him, and that for her sake he led a good life. Hardly was she laid to rest among his distinguished ancestors in the old family burying ground, before, as you would say, he ‘broke loose.’ His debaucheries, his mad running through of his great fortune, and that of the little old gentleman who had been her father, brought him to what he was today, when the only friends he had left

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were those here in this house. Few, if any, there are, who remember that beautiful gesture, that white year of tenderness and restraint for one towards whom he felt only compassion."

Grandfather sat silent as the dusk crept around us. "It may be, though, that as he had compassion on one whose body was weak and frail, compassion will be shown his ruined soul, and when the poor Rake asks for forgiveness of sins, pity will be shown him, and it will be said unto him, 'You but anticipated Me . . . .'"



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## PHILANTHROPIST

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UPON a late afternoon, in early summer, three of us strolled arm in arm up Franklin Street; three born within a few months of one another, and in infancy, parked side by side in Monroe Park, while our mammies gossiped upon the park benches; three who had moved thus far through life together. We had had the same private schooling and attended the same dancing master. We worshipped in the same church, persuaded that any one who did not, would be overlooked by an aristocratic deity. We would each some day come out, be given a reception, and stand all clothed in purest white, beside mother and aunts, our arms full of pink roses; and our *ultima Thule* would be reached when we attended our first Monday german.

We were the daughters of those handsome

houses all up and down Franklin Street. We were entirely certain that our families were the hub of the universe. We were distractingly pretty—so we were told—with none quicker to agree to that than ourselves. In short, we were as abysmally ignorant of a single fact, or occupation of practical value, as the spirals of the chestnut blossoms over our pompadoured heads.

Laced to an eighteen-inch-waist, in pale, ruffled organdies, we strolled past the lovely old house where now stands the Jefferson Hotel. A block away were gathered a group of young men, sons of the same Franklin Street. Elaborately we appeared not to see them. Actually they had been drawing us towards this moment with every sun-drenched hour of that summer day. As we approached this group, a Victoria flashed by. We were faint with the coincidence. That *she* should have passed, just as we were about to bow. Most embarrassing!

Out of sight sped the Victoria, but not until we had absorbed every detail: the high-stepping strawberry roans with their cream-colored manes

and tails; the two men servants on the box, impeccable livery, cockades upon the side of their silk hats, silver buttons glistening on plum-colored coats—all in perfect form; the footman with folded arms, the coachman holding reins and whip, chest high.

Upon the seat of the Victoria reclined alone a woman whom, when Rome was young, would have moulded an Emperor's destiny. Dark, disdainful, gowned in white and framed in the lace of her parasol, she drove up Franklin Street every afternoon at the same hour. The town holding its breath, exhaled a sigh of relief when she had passed, this passing being the apex of the day for the godly and the ungodly alike.

The Mayor of Richmond had been asked by certain ladies, ardent in church societies, that this woman be restrained from thus making such a show of herself up Franklin Street. A certain dry goods emporium had been patronized by all these estimable females, because the proprietor had refused the privileges of his store

to the town's gorgeous Magdalen. She was the most engrossing subject of the day, a topic upon which silence fell as we approached our elders. Therefore, we informed ourselves thoroughly. We knew her name, and, also the name of the man who caused her thus to drive behind that spanking pair. Deeply we bit into the fruit of knowledge.

\*            \*            \*

Another memory assails me, in which all the senses seem to participate. There is the aroma of a cigar, the diffusing fragrance of Old Bumgardner, good food about to be served. Upon the table are stacked blue, white, and red poker chips, and fine, new playing cards. I am unnoticed behind my *Maury's Physical Geography*. Two gentlemen sit at the table, idly shuffling with delicately powerful hands. They await others before the game can begin. Through the blue haze of cigar smoke their words reach me.

They speak with quiet gravity. "She saved me. I had given fifty thousand dollars to the

. . . . Church, the same to her when I broke with her. It took just that amount to tide me over. I asked the good brothers of the church to let me have it as security. They refused. How she knew that I was desperate I never learned, but she came and gave it all back to me. It did the trick, the tide turned, the danger passed, I returned it all to her with interest. I have never seen her since. But for her I would be a ruined man."

The rest of the company arrived. The play began. I kissed four fragrant whiskers good night, and climbed the stairs to bed. What St. Paul calls the mystery of iniquity, submerged me. I was shaken with questioning amazement. They had called the name of the woman in the Victoria. It was she who had given back the money, and saved the father of my dearest friend . . . . and that was what I could not understand.

\* \* \*

The years have passed, and I understand. Rich in age and in good deeds, one of our fore-

most citizens has just died. He has left an honorable name, a well-founded family, staunchly impregnable: each with his great house; his ample fortune; all distinguished variously in art, letters and the professions, pillars of church and state. No weighty matter of our Commonwealth is decided without their representation upon its board. They are the bone and sinew of our prosperity.

"A great philanthropist." So spoke the press all over the country, and rightly so, for bequests aggregating millions had been left to charity. Yes, a great philanthropist.

In a notice tucked away in the same paper, marked "too late to classify," I read of another death, in an obscure part of the town. The name brought back a summer evening, when all the world was young, and the breathless passing of beauty. Then again memory clicked, and I heard a fine voice saying, "But for her I would be a ruined man."





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